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U.S. AID TO EGYPT

ANNCR: THERE'S A DEBATE GOING ON IN WASHINGTON THESE DAYS ABOUT WHETHER THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SELL SIX TRANSPORT PLANES TO EGYPT. BUT---AS VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY POINTS OUT---THE DEBATE IS REALLY ABOUT MORE THAN SIX PLANES:

VOICE:

ON THE SURFACE OF IT, THE DISCUSSION GOING ON IN CONGRESS---AND BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE AND STATE DEPARTMENT---IS ABOUT WHETHER TO SELL SIX MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANES TO EGYPT. BUT IT IS WIDELY SEEN AS SOMETHING MORE---A DEBATE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY AND ADVISABILITY OF LONG-TERM MILITARY AID TO EGYPT.

THE DEBATE HAS ACTUALLY BEEN GOING ON FOR SOME TIME, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT HEIGHTENED BY PRESIDENT SADAT'S DECISION LAST SUNDAY TO TERMINATE THE SOVIET-EGYPTIAN FRIENDSHIP TREATY. PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY THINK THE SALE OF THE PLANES WOULD INDICATE SUPPORT FOR THE FORCES OF MODERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROSPECTS FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. BUT JEWISH LEADERS HERE SEE IT DIFFERENTLY. THEY DO NOT OBJECT TO THE PROGRAM OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC AID TO EGYPT, WHICH IS ALREADY UNDERWAY. BUT THEY ARE CONCERNED, AS ONE OF THEM SAID, THAT THE PLANE SALE WOULD BE "A SYMBOLIC ACT REPRESENTING THE BEGINNING OF A PROCESS" WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE THREAT TO ISRAEL'S SECURITY. THE ADMINISTRATION, IN TURN, HAS POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS NO SPECIFIC PROGRAM FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES TO EGYPT, AND THAT IF THE POINT IS REACHED WHEN SUCH A PROGRAM IS PROPOSED THERE WILL BE A FULL DISCUSSION WITH CONGRESS. THESE

REASSURANCES, HOWEVER, DO NOT AS YET APPEAR TO HAVE QUIETED THE MISGIVINGS OF THE JEWISH LEADERS, SOME OF WHOM MET WITH PRESIDENT FORD WEDNESDAY FOR WHAT WAS DESCRIBED IN PRESS REPORTS AS "A VERY FRANK PRIVATE MEETING."

THE PROBLEM FOR CONGRESS IS OBVIOUS. ISRAELI SECURITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PARAMOUNT CONSIDERATION--AND YET IT IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS A CHANGING ONE WHICH MAY REQUIRE A NEW LOOK AT SOME OLD POLICIES. THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT SOLD ANY ARMS TO EGYPT FOR TWENTY YEARS---AND THE FACT THAT A POSSIBLE SHIFT IN THAT POLICY IS EVEN UNDER DISCUSSION REFLECTS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CHANGE. IN THE DEBATE OVER THE TRANSPORT PLANES, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS EMPHASIZED THAT ITS PRIMARY CONCERN IN THIS WHOLE MATTER IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF A CLIMATE IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT WILL IMPROVE THE PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT. IT OBVIOUSLY HOPES TO PERSUADE CONGRESS THAT THE UNITED STATES NOW HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO JUST THAT.

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